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Our Way
The 2017 Spring Wedding Issue

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MARCH 16-29, 2017

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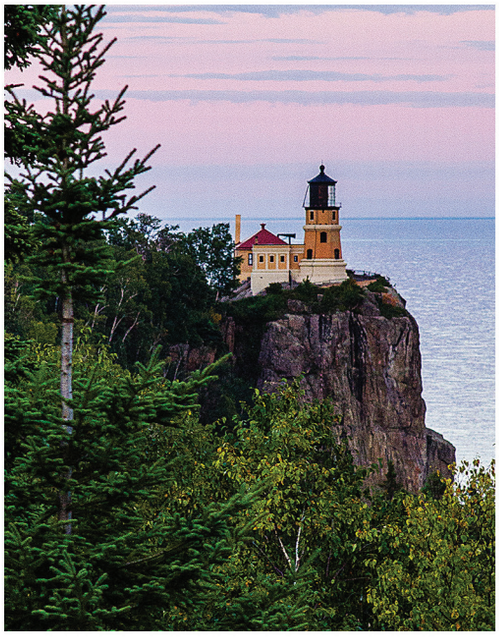
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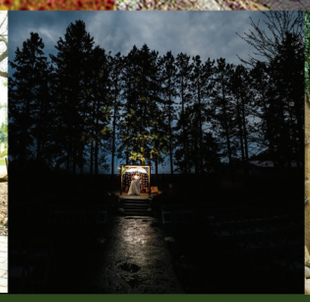


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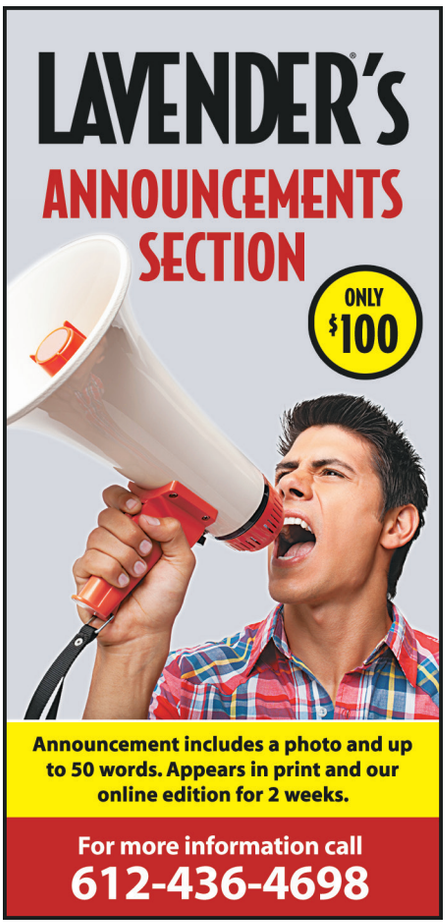


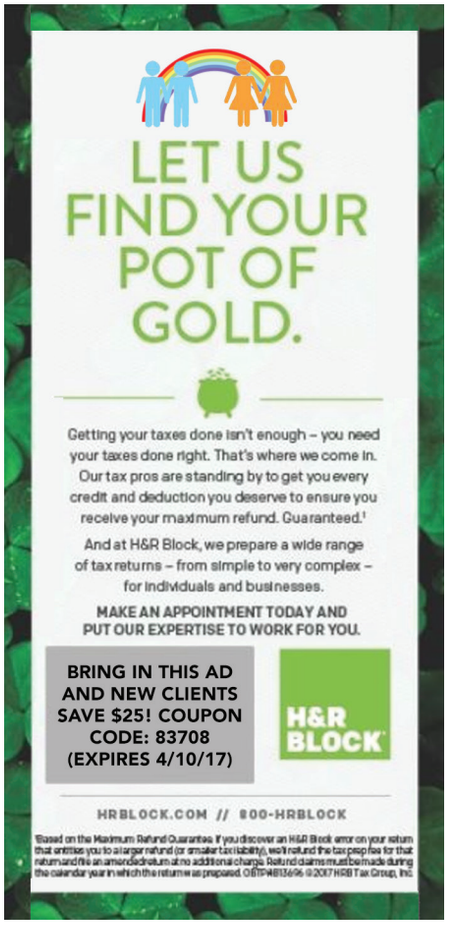
Photo courtesy of Stephen Vincent Design.

ON THE COVER
If there's one thing to take away from this wedding issue, it's that this is a community that loves...and loves to do it our way. Photo of Tracy and Kristy by Kasey & Ben Photography








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FROM THE EDITOR | BY ANDY LIEN

Our Way

Though I'm turning 40 next month and I've yet to marry, this is the 12th wedding issue I've produced. In a matter of no time, I could pretty much throw together a March Madness bracket's worth of wedding vendor dream teams for your special day, depending on what you're looking for, where, and when. Or two brackets. Or three. We have so many talented vendors and unique venues that it's a snap to come up with a whole lot of people and businesses to make your wedding exactly what you want it to be, done your way.

When I became editor of *Lavender* in 2011, we reorganized the website and magazine with new categories. Things became more personal by putting "Our" in front of the various sections. "Our Lives," "Our Scene," "Our Causes," "Our Homes," and so many other ways to indicate that we're in this together. This community has a membership full of people that are accountable to each other due to shared circumstances and experiences. And, as a community that's moved from the fringe to the center with the legalization of same-sex marriage, it's a community that has always celebrated our weddings "our way." There were no examples out there for same-sex weddings. The pioneers who married each other before it was legal (or when it was legal in only certain states) did so with opposite-sex weddings as the standard, but really did it their own way as trailblazers. They gave us templates to use for weddings ever since, as do the people in these pages.

Such lovely people, such lovely weddings. And they did it their own way too. To give you a few things to think about, we've got E.B. Boatner considering whether or not to marry as an older person in 2017, Shane Lueck reporting on what's trendy for wedding aisle fashion this year, and Kassidy Tarala telling us all about how to design your own wedding jewelry with Stephen Vincent Design Studio as well as giving plenty of options for venues, new and old.

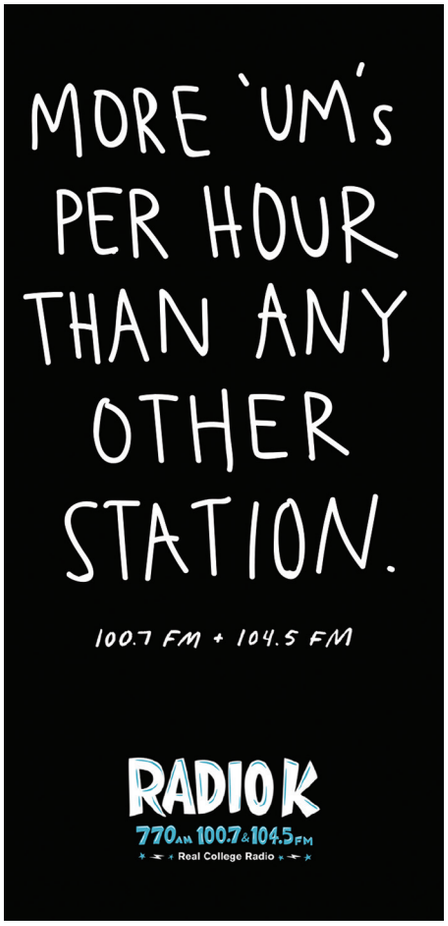
Then, the weddings. Your weddings. Our weddings. The stories, the pictures, the love. Michael and Joel threw a big ol' brunch for everyone. Tracy and Kristy had an official ceremony, a baby, and a celebration a year later. They did it their way.

Finally, be sure to see the Real Weddings that round out each wedding issue. Go online for additional pictures that didn't fit into the print version and enjoy seeing the ceremonies, celebrations, and people who are still considered trailblazers in my book.

With you and with love,

Andy ■





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What is TRUVADA for PrEP (Pre-exposure Prophylaxis)?

TRUVADA is a prescription medicine that can be used for PrEP to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection when used together with safer sex practices. This use is only for adults who are at high risk of getting HIV-1 through sex. This includes HIV-negative men who have sex with men and who are at high risk of getting infected with HIV-1 through sex, and male-female sex partners when one partner has HIV-1 infection and the other does not.

Ask your healthcare provider if you have questions about how to prevent getting HIV-1. Always practice safer sex and use condoms to lower the chance of sexual contact with body fluids. Never reuse or share needles or other items that have body fluids on them.

IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

What is the most important information I should know about TRUVADA for PrEP?

Before taking TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce your risk of getting HIV-1 infection:

- **You must be HIV-negative.** You must get tested to make sure that you do not already have HIV-1 infection. Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 unless you are confirmed to be HIV-negative.
- **Many HIV-1 tests can miss HIV-1 infection in a person who has recently become infected.** If you have flu-like symptoms, you could have recently become infected with HIV-1. Tell your healthcare provider if you had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting TRUVADA for PrEP or at any time while taking TRUVADA for PrEP. Symptoms of new HIV-1 infection include tiredness, fever, joint or muscle aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, night sweats, and/or enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin.

While taking TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce your risk of getting HIV-1 infection:

- **You must continue using safer sex practices. Just taking TRUVADA for PrEP may not keep you from getting HIV-1.**
- **You must stay HIV-negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.**
- **To further help reduce your risk of getting HIV-1:**
  - Know your HIV-1 status and the HIV-1 status of your partners.
  - Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months or when your healthcare provider tells you.
  - Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections. Other infections make it easier for HIV-1 to infect you.
  - Get information and support to help reduce risky sexual behavior.
  - Have fewer sex partners.
  - Do not miss any doses of TRUVADA. Missing doses may increase your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
  - If you think you were exposed to HIV-1, tell your healthcare provider right away.
- **If you do become HIV-1 positive, you need more medicine than TRUVADA alone to treat HIV-1.** TRUVADA by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.

TRUVADA can cause serious side effects:

- **Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis),** which is a serious medical emergency. Symptoms of lactic acidosis include weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, nausea, vomiting, stomach-area pain, cold or blue hands and feet, feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or fast or abnormal heartbeats.
- **Serious liver problems.** Your liver may become large and tender, and you may develop fat in your liver. Symptoms of liver problems include your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark "tea-colored" urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, and/or stomach-area pain.
- **You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or serious liver problems** if you are female, very overweight (obese), or have been taking TRUVADA for a long time. In some cases, these serious conditions have led to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any symptoms of these conditions.
- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** If you also have HBV and take TRUVADA, your hepatitis may become worse if you stop taking TRUVADA. Do not stop taking TRUVADA without first talking to your healthcare provider. If your healthcare provider tells you to stop taking TRUVADA, they will need to watch you closely for several months to monitor your health. TRUVADA is not approved for the treatment of HBV.

Who should not take TRUVADA for PrEP?

Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP if you already have HIV-1 infection or if you do not know your HIV-1 status. If you are HIV-1 positive, you need to take other medicines with TRUVADA to treat HIV-1. TRUVADA by itself is not a complete treatment for HIV-1. If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.

Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP if you also take lamivudine (Epivir-HBV) or adefovir (HEPSERA).



What are the other possible side effects of TRUVADA for PrEP?

Serious side effects of TRUVADA may also include:

- **Kidney problems, including kidney failure.** Your healthcare provider may do blood tests to check your kidneys before and during treatment with TRUVADA for PrEP. If you develop kidney problems, your healthcare provider may tell you to stop taking TRUVADA for PrEP.
- **Bone problems,** including bone pain or bones getting soft or thin, may lead to fractures. Your healthcare provider may do tests to check your bones.
- **Changes in body fat,** which can happen in people taking TRUVADA or medicines like TRUVADA.

Common side effects in people taking TRUVADA for PrEP are stomach-area (abdomen) pain, headache, and decreased weight. Tell your healthcare provider if you have any side effects that bother you or do not go away.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before taking TRUVADA for PrEP?

- **All your health problems.** Be sure to tell your healthcare provider if you have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis virus infection.
- **If you are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.** It is not known if TRUVADA can harm your unborn baby. If you become pregnant while taking TRUVADA for PrEP, talk to your healthcare provider to decide if you should keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.
  Pregnancy Registry: A pregnancy registry collects information about your health and the health of your baby. There is a pregnancy registry for women who take medicines to prevent HIV-1 during pregnancy. For more information about the registry and how it works, talk to your healthcare provider.
- **If you are breastfeeding** (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed. The medicines in TRUVADA can pass to your baby in breast milk. If you become HIV-1 positive, HIV-1 can be passed to the baby in breast milk.
- **All the medicines you take,** including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements. TRUVADA may interact with other medicines. Keep a list of all your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.
- **If you take certain other medicines** with TRUVADA for PrEP, your healthcare provider may need to check you more often or change your dose. These medicines include ledipasvir with sofosbuvir (HARVONI).

You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.FDA.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Please see Important Facts about TRUVADA for PrEP including important warnings on the following page.



Have you heard about

TRUVADA for PrEP™?

The **once-daily prescription medicine** that can help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 when used **with safer sex practices.**

- TRUVADA for PrEP is only for **adults who are at high risk of getting HIV through sex.**
- You **must be HIV-negative** before you start taking TRUVADA for PrEP.

Ask your doctor about your risk of getting HIV-1 infection and if TRUVADA for PrEP may be right for you.

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IMPORTANT FACTS

This is only a brief summary of important information about taking TRUVADA for PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection. This does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your medicine.

MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT TRUVADA FOR PrEP

Before starting TRUVADA for PrEP to help reduce your risk of getting HIV-1 infection:

- **You must be HIV-1 negative.** You must get tested to make sure that you do not already have HIV-1 infection. Do not take TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 unless you are confirmed to be HIV-1 negative.
- **Many HIV-1 tests can miss HIV-1 infection in a person who has recently become infected.** Symptoms of new HIV-1 infection include flu-like symptoms, tiredness, fever, joint or muscle aches, headache, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, rash, night sweats, and/or enlarged lymph nodes in the neck or groin. Tell your healthcare provider if you have had a flu-like illness within the last month before starting TRUVADA for PrEP.

While taking TRUVADA for PrEP to help reduce your risk of getting HIV-1 infection:

- **You must continue using safer sex practices. Just taking TRUVADA for PrEP may not keep you from getting HIV-1.**
- **You must stay HIV-1 negative to keep taking TRUVADA for PrEP.**
- **Tell your healthcare provider if you have a flu-like illness while taking TRUVADA for PrEP.**
- If you think you were exposed to HIV-1, tell your healthcare provider right away.
- **If you do become HIV-1 positive, you need more medicine than TRUVADA alone to treat HIV-1.** If you have HIV-1 and take only TRUVADA, your HIV-1 may become harder to treat over time.
- **See the "How to Further Reduce Your Risk" section for more information.**

TRUVADA may cause serious side effects, including:

- **Buildup of lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis),** which is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: weakness or being more tired than usual, unusual muscle pain, being short of breath or fast breathing, nausea, vomiting, stomach-area pain, cold or blue hands and feet, feeling dizzy or lightheaded, and/or fast or abnormal heartbeats.
- **Severe liver problems,** which in some cases can lead to death. Call your healthcare provider right away if you have any of these symptoms: your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow, dark "tea-colored" urine, light-colored stools, loss of appetite for several days or longer, nausea, and/or stomach-area pain.
- **Worsening of hepatitis B (HBV) infection.** If you have HBV and take TRUVADA, your hepatitis may become worse if you stop taking TRUVADA. Do not stop taking TRUVADA without first talking to your healthcare provider, as they will need to check your health regularly for several months.

You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or severe liver problems if you are female, very overweight, or have been taking TRUVADA for a long time.

ABOUT TRUVADA FOR PrEP (PRE-EXPOSURE PROPHYLAXIS)

TRUVADA is a prescription medicine used with safer sex practices for PrEP to help reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection in adults at high risk:

- HIV-1 negative men who have sex with men and who are at high risk of getting infected with HIV-1 through sex.
- Male-female sex partners when one partner has HIV-1 infection and the other does not.

To help determine your risk, talk openly with your doctor about your sexual health.

Do NOT take TRUVADA for PrEP if you:

- **Already have HIV-1 infection or if you do not know your HIV-1 status.**
- Take lamivudine (Epivir-HBV) or adefovir (HEPSERA).

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF TRUVADA FOR PrEP

TRUVADA can cause serious side effects, including:

- Those in the "Most Important Information About TRUVADA for PrEP" section.
- New or worse kidney problems, including kidney failure.
- Bone problems.
- Changes in body fat.

Common side effects in people taking TRUVADA for PrEP include stomach-area (abdomen) pain, headache, and decreased weight.

These are not all the possible side effects of TRUVADA. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you have any new symptoms while taking TRUVADA for PrEP.

Your healthcare provider will need to do tests to monitor your health before and during treatment with TRUVADA for PrEP.

BEFORE TAKING TRUVADA FOR PrEP

Tell your healthcare provider if you:

- Have or have had any kidney, bone, or liver problems, including hepatitis infection.
- Have any other medical conditions.
- Are pregnant or plan to become pregnant.
- Are breastfeeding (nursing) or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed if you become HIV-1 positive because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take:

- Keep a list that includes all prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements, and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist.
- Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about medicines that should not be taken with TRUVADA for PrEP.

HOW TO TAKE TRUVADA FOR PrEP

- **Take 1 tablet once a day, every day,** not just when you think you have been exposed to HIV-1.
- Do not miss any doses. Missing doses may increase your risk of getting HIV-1 infection.
- You **must** practice safer sex by using condoms and you **must** stay HIV-1 negative.

HOW TO FURTHER REDUCE YOUR RISK

- Know your HIV-1 status and the HIV-1 status of your partners.
- Get tested for HIV-1 at least every 3 months or when your healthcare provider tells you.
- Get tested for other sexually transmitted infections. Other infections make it easier for HIV-1 to infect you.
- Get information and support to help reduce risky sexual behavior.
- Have fewer sex partners.
- Do not share needles or personal items that can have blood or body fluids on them.

GET MORE INFORMATION

- This is only a brief summary of important information about TRUVADA for PrEP to reduce the risk of getting HIV-1 infection. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist to learn more, including how to prevent HIV-1 infection.
- Go to start.truvada.com or call 1-800-GILEAD-5
- If you need help paying for your medicine, visit start.truvada.com for program information.

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A WORD IN EDGEWISE | BY E.B. BOATNER

Marriage in the Gloaming

Asked for my about my opinions on marriage for older gay folks, my first reaction was, "Don't!" But then, I remembered that even close friends frequently call me "baleful," and that just because my own marriage lasted only two years less two days, doesn't mean there might not be other sides to the story. Actually, I know several older people who have entered into, or are about to reenter, matrimony. Some, after August 2013, were married after decades of togetherness, others are contemplating the leap for the first time. So, some thoughts:

One must first of all determine what constitutes "older," or "senior." When I was 23, 40 seemed well into dotage, while now it beckons from the spring-chicken side of the divide.

There are entrance considerations like, "Should our union be monogamous or open?" the urgency of which may or may not diminish in intensity as one ages, but is still a subject that should be explored before the "I do"s are done.

Marriage at any age, whether undertaken of one's own free will or brokered through one's esteemed parents, and whether you wish it to be so or not, will be enmeshed in the tentacles of financial realities. Money. Cash. The old spondulix. Does one of you have significantly more holdings than the other, in real estate, cash, or earning power? (As to this last, refer to the above on "What constitutes older or senior?" Is one or both of you still working? Is either one of you retired? Where does the fiduciary power lie?)

Take my word for it (I don't choose to offer personal examples here) that the bottom line is: love doesn't pay the rent. Or the mortgage. Or the grocery bill. Rather than plunging into shared savings and checking accounts, a prudent choice is to maintain a third, joint account to pay shared bills; keep your personal money separate so your beloved can't complain when you plunk down five figures for a 78 by blues legend Tommy Johnson while you bite your tongue when he brings home a very fine copy of *Action Comics No. 1.*

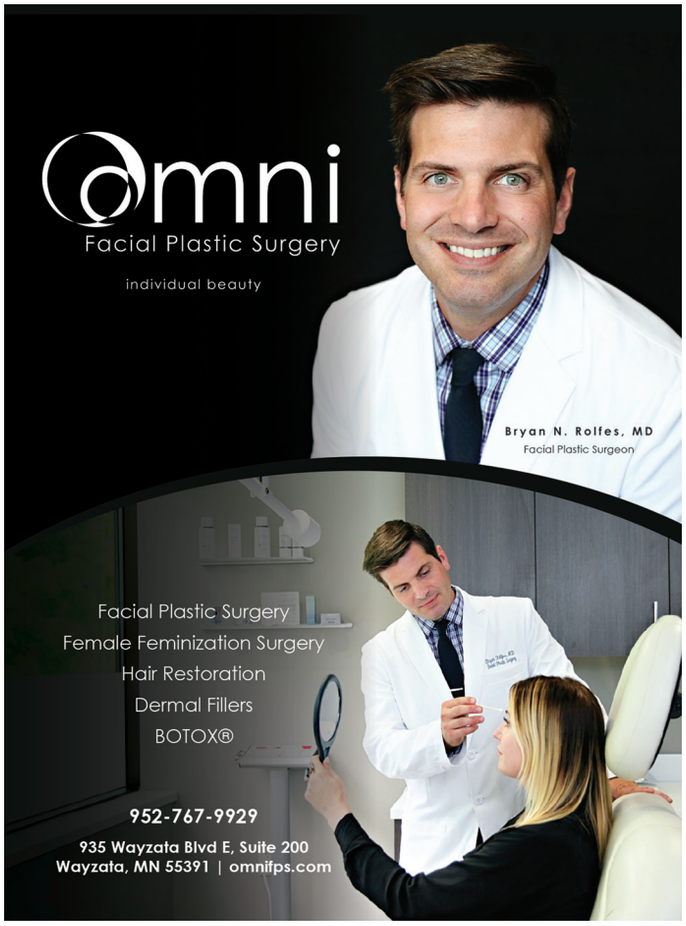
I would advise anyone, of any age, coupled or not, to have a will. You're never too young to die, and the older you get, the more actuarially sound it is to prepare for the future time when you aren't. Especially if you marry. Make sure your spouse is provided for in the most specific way possible. Not only for the disbursement of money and real estate, but of yourself. Write a will; write a living will with medical directives, and make sure they're in the hands of as many people and institutions as are needed to carry them out. (After Dad's death, the funeral director spoke of handsome caskets and other pomp and circumstances until I reminded him Dad had already told them that he wanted to be cremated and put in a cardboard box. "Um, yes, that's so…" he conceded.)

Once you think you've got it all sorted out — the sex, the money, the… (what else is there?) — you'll arrive at that issue that by everyone's definition is a deal-breaker: "Should the toilet paper go under or over?" Your only recourse is to secure a dwelling with two loos, one under each partner's sole jurisdiction, and never, ever, mention the subject again.

I suppose you might ask after all these opinions about marriage for the older gay, whether I would myself remarry. Well, at the divorce, my Boston lawyer said I couldn't marry for six months. I told him he needn't worry. I've given it some thought over the intervening 51 years and have come to this conclusion: I would marry for fondness, a sharing of resources, and the security, such as it might be, that my goods and chattels might help sustain him should I predecease him, and his sustain me should the alternative occur.

This would bring up yet another problem not covered above. I am an only child with no offspring, nieces, nephews, cousins or whatnot, and most potential partners, even of the old or senior variety, have someone — or several someones — ahead of me in line for their largess.

Besides, I prefer to live alone, with my own hours and zero noise level. I'll just tick along with my books, beer, and La-Z-Boy, and see what comes my way. But go ahead; marry, enjoy, grow old(er) together. My felicitations and best wishes to you happy (and now properly prepared) couples-to-be! ■





[FASHION]

The Wedding Guys: "CLASSIC IS ALWAYS ON-TREND"



BY SHANE LUECK | PHOTOGRAPHY BY LAUREN B PHOTOGRAPHY

Tulle and chiffon as far as the eye can see! March 5 marked the eighth time the large-scale Twin Cities Bridal Show was produced in St. Paul by The Wedding Guys.

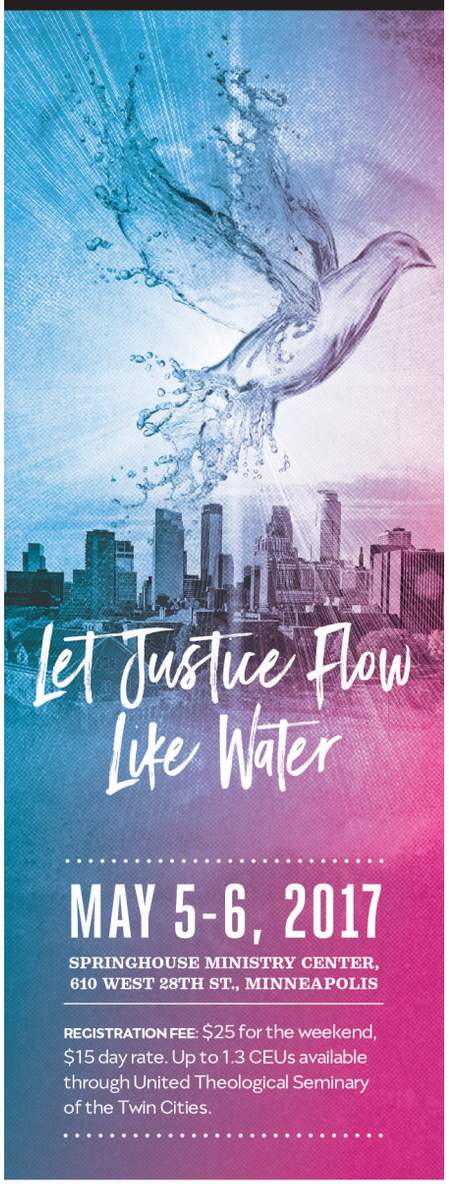
All eyes were on the Aisle of Style Fashion Show, a multimedia production worthy of New York Fashion Week, as 35 models walked the runway in fashions provided by Mestad's Bridal and Formalwear, The Wedding Shoppe, Savvi Formalwear, and Luxe Bridal Couture.

In 2002, Bruce Vassar and Matthew Trettel, known as The Wedding Guys, were the first show producers to bring six international designers to the Twin Cities for an elegant evening event called The Wedding Gala. The event featured high-end artisans in the local wedding industry The Wedding Guys considered couture, in other words, people who hand-designed and created authentic work.

"It was during this time we were meeting with Don Jensen of Linen Effect and he said, 'You two know everything about the wedding industry you are like The Wedding Guys of weddings,' and it stuck!" Vassar says. "Our goal was to bring wedding trends of the East and West Coasts to the Midwest at a faster pace. Now, with social media, it's almost instantaneous. We look at weddings and think what 'can be' instead of what is trending, because if it's trending it's already been done."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

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Nicole is a self-identified transgender Latina. She began her transition, MTF, while employed as a law enforcement officer for the state of Colorado. She is now a private counselor in Longmont, CO, and a MDiv Student at Luther Seminary.

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The drawback to following trends is the after effect of inevitably dating your wedding as you look back at the photos as years go by. "You can never go wrong with a 'classic' look, it will never date an image," Vassar says. "The barn scene has been very trendy the last few years, so in time you will eventually look and say, 'Oh, that was back in 2015.'"

Fashion choices for the big day can date an image, but Vassar says there is really no getting around it. "Classic is always on-trend. A-line and ball gowns will always stand the test of time," Vassar says. "It's the fit and flare, mermaid, and high-low gowns which seem to have more of a hills-and-valley popularity," he adds.

According to Vassar, designs that have been sweeping down runways feature the illusion style or "see-through look," subsequently causing nude colors to make their mark on wedding fashions to facilitate the illusion. The popularity of the nude pallet paved the way for other colors, like blue/gray, blush, and gold to come on quickly.

Vassar says other trends to pay attention to include fuller A-line gowns that don't quite spill into the princess ball gown category, longer and detachable trains ("it's all about the drama, you know"), plunging necklines and low backs, and tulle or chiffon overskirts which can be removed for the reception, revealing the short- or long-form fitted party dress.

Past seasons saw the appearance of wedding pant suits in the market (indeed, a pant suit was featured in *Lavender*'s 2016 Spring Wedding Issue), and they continue to grow in popularity. But what is especially curious to see are gowns incorporating elements from various decades of fashion: cowl backs from the '40s, sleeves from the '70s, and long trains from the '90s.

For those looking to dress more masculine to say "I do," Vassar encourages you to take note of the fabric boutonniere trend, popular for both suits and tuxedos as well as more colorful bow ties with polka dots, stripes, and floral patterns. But ties don't get to have all the fun! Patterned socks (sometimes mismatched) are gaining a stronghold in popularity, which translates to a shorter pant leg tailoring to show them off.

Speaking of tailoring, Vassar says the slim fit is slowly being introduced to the tuxedo scene, with thinner lapels. Oh, by the way, the formal tuxedo is making a comeback, but this isn't your old-fashioned tuxedo. Colors like wine and blue are giving the black tuxedo a run for the money. And plaid, believe it or not, is taking the suit world by storm with a solid trouser or full-on plaid for the entire suit.







"Trends to us, quite honestly, are things which are going full-circle in time, they are just positioned differently or in a juxtaposition with something more modern," Vassar says. "Weddings are traditional in the true sense of the word so you will never get away from some aspects of tradition. Trends are always in the visual aspect of weddings and sometimes they are just unique to one wedding and not another based on the likes and dislikes of the couple."

Ultimately, he says it must be about the couple, "true to each of them as authentic in style as they are unique individuals. It's not about a specific color or style as everyone has their favorite; it's what makes a couple unique and tells their story."

If you missed the Twin Cities Bridal Show at the beginning of March, but you're looking for more inspiration or want to keep up on wedding trends, mark the calendar. The Wedding Guys have three shows coming up in the fall.

"Our shows have always been gender neutral," Vassar says, "so same-sex couples will have a great experience too. The Twin Cities Bridal Show is very inclusive […] so don't be confused by the term bridal (which means a marriage festival or ceremony) because the Twin Cities Bridal Show is for the bride and bridegroom, bride and bride, or groom and groom." ■

FALL DATES:
Unveiled
Minneapolis Convention Center, Sept. 17
Unveiled Rochester
Mayo Civic Center, Oct. 22
Twin Cities Bridal Show
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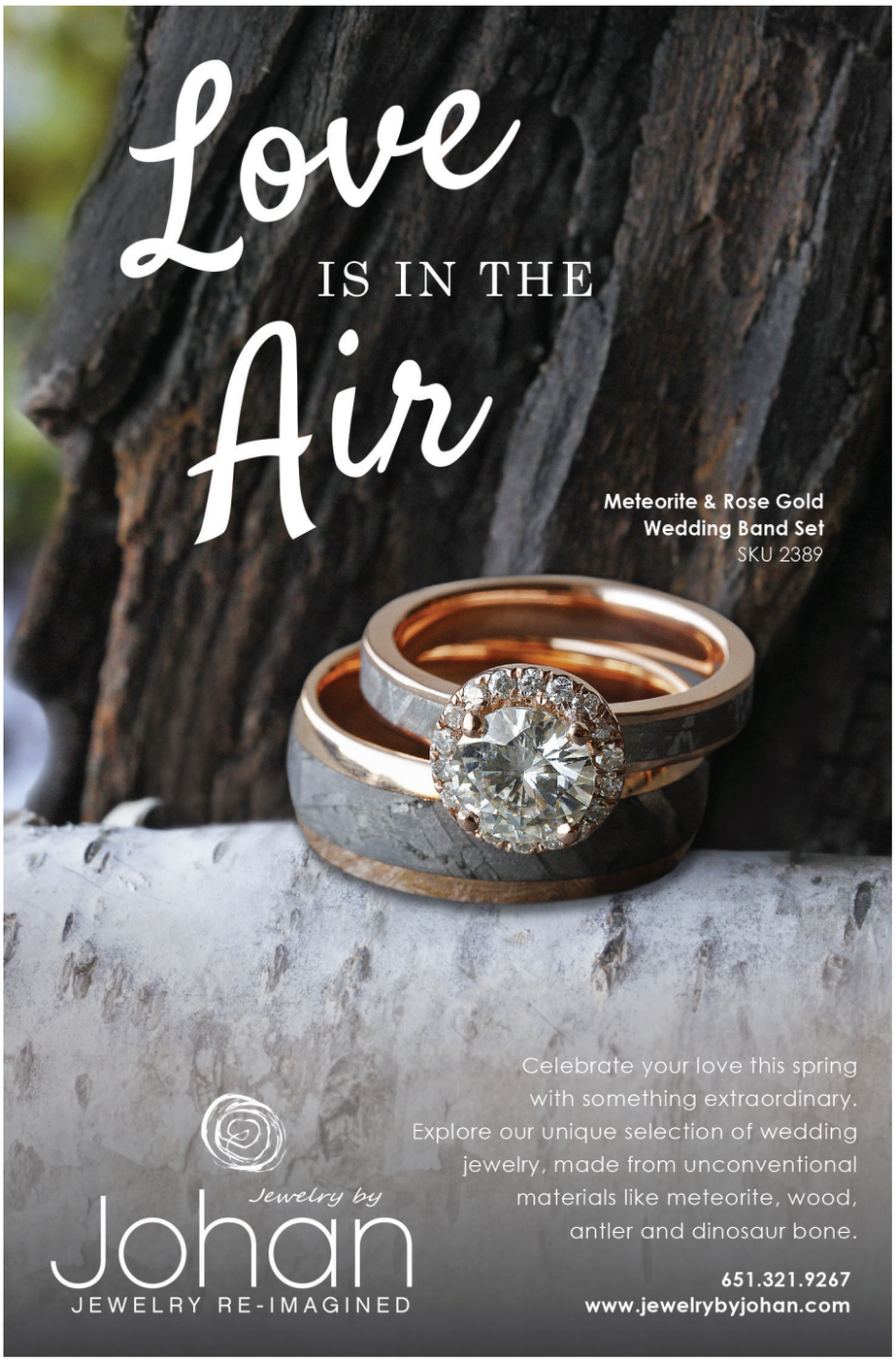


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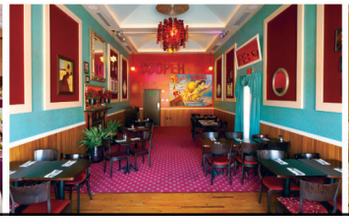


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[JEWELRY]

IF THE RING FITS, BUY IT





BY KASSIDY TARALA



Photos by Stephen Vincent Design

Everybody expresses love differently. Some romance their significant others with flowers or small surprises. Others leave love notes around the house to show appreciation for the little things their spouses do. A universal sign of love is arguably one of the most important: the ring.

When looking for a ring, people can often feel overwhelmed. Every relationship is special, unique, and incredibly different from the next one. So how does a couple pick out a pair of rings that represents their one-of-a-kind relationship? The team at Stephen Vincent Design has come up with a solution to this longstanding nuisance of a question: custom-made wedding rings.

Located in Minneapolis, Stephen Vincent Design has been catering to Minnesota's lovestruck for over 40 years. The process of designing a wedding ring is very hands-on and well guided with the help of staff members at Stephen Vincent Design. "We take pride in guiding and educating our customers. We know it's a big investment on many different levels, and we want them to know that we care about their choices," says the Stephen Vincent Design team.

Customers can set up appointments to discuss their lives and relationships, and plan out sketches for their ring sets. Along with sketches, Stephen Vincent Design offers CAD drawings that are drawn to scale to showcase the gems in the colors, sizes, quality, and price ranges that are suitable for each individual client. "All of our rings are carefully handmade, and we encourage them to choose a gem quality to reflect that through grading education and visual examples," staff of Stephen Vincent Design says.

According to Stephen Vincent Design, some upcoming spring trends that they're seeing include pear shapes, marquis cuts, and rustic diamonds.Yellow gold, large gems, and small bands are also strong styles for spring. Balancing trendy styles with timelessness creates a sense of tradition while keeping an eye on the future.

Durability plays an important role in the process of selecting a gem for a wedding ring. The most durable gems are sapphires, which are typically used in engagement rings. Sapphires can range from blue and green to red and pink to white and yellow. A variety of metals is available too. Palladium, platinum, 18K yellow gold, and 18K white gold are typically used for engagement and wedding rings. Prices vary depending on the type of gem, the gem size, and the material used for the band, but the team at Stephen Vincent Design works according to the price range of each individual client.

Custom rings typically take longer to make than other pieces of jewelry, with an estimated six-week turnaround rate. Stephen Vincent Design recommends providing at least eight weeks between designing the rings and the wedding to ensure that they are done on time.

Stephen Vincent Design has a list of tips for ring buyers who don't know what to expect:

Custom doesn't mean unaffordable.

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If you want to surprise your beloved, their team can help in a variety of ways.

Come into the store before you are anxious about purchasing. Stephen Vincent Design hosts "Save the Best for Last" events every last Thursday of the month from 5–8 p.m. where guests can enjoy cocktails, look around, and ask as many questions as they want.

The staff is there to help make it a less stressful and more exciting, fun time in your life.

Showing your love and appreciation for your significant other shouldn't be stressful or difficult. With the help of Stephen Vincent Design, you can design rings that are as unique and thoughtful as your special someone while enjoying every step of the process. ■

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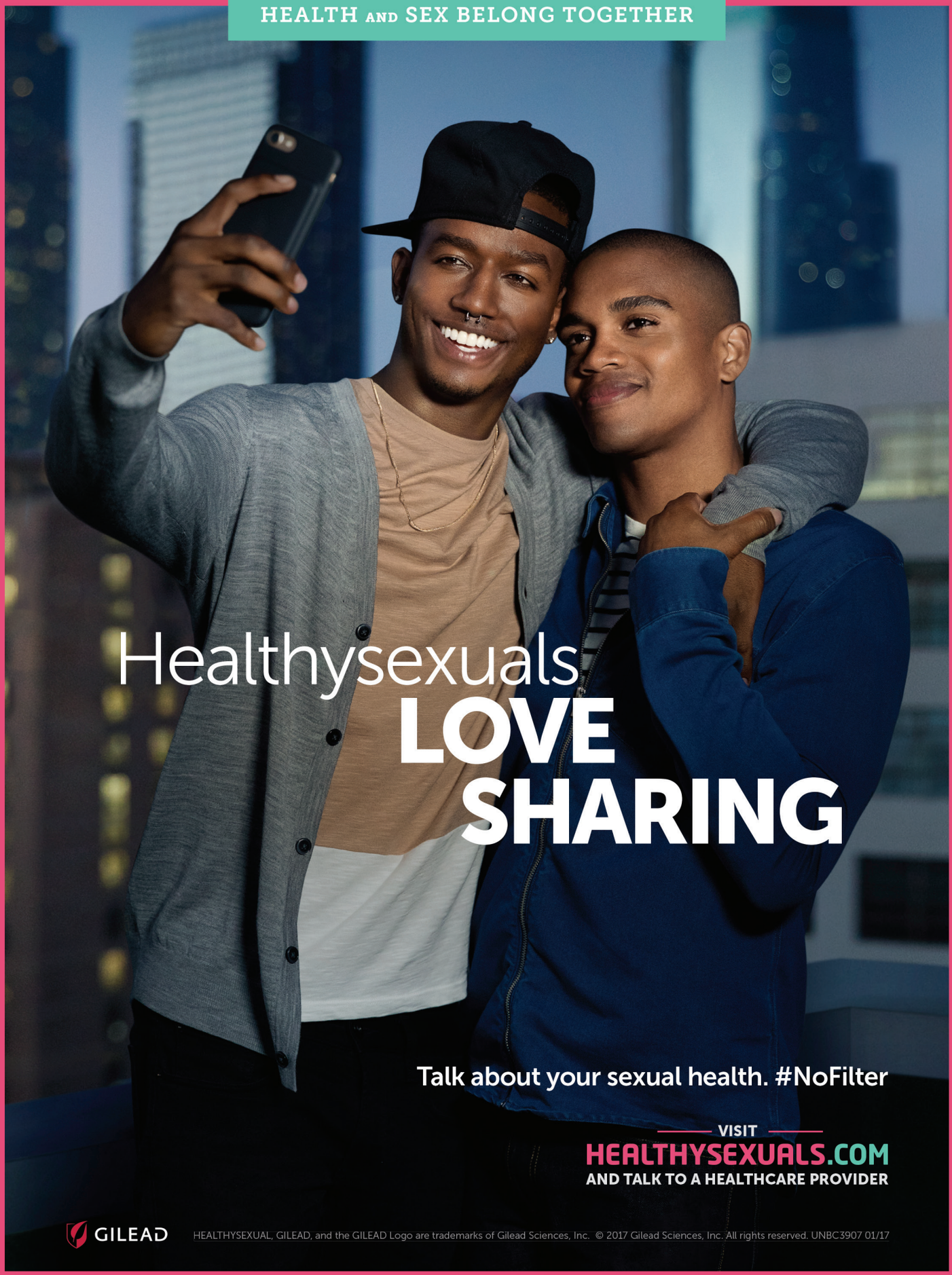








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Shindig. Photo courtesy of Shindig Event Space

Something Borrowed, SOMETHING (RE)NEWED

BY KASSIDY TARALA

The Twin Cities area is known for an amazingly artistic, cultural, and diverse atmosphere. The cities are where we crave to live. They're where we yearn to explore. So it's no wonder that it's where we choose to tie the knot with the one we love most, surrounded by the people and the scenery that make these beautiful cities home. Thankfully, the variety of wedding venues is as expansive and impressive as the rest of the cities.

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The Landing Hotel. Image courtesy of the Cuningham Group



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Guests: up to 400

Available for: Rehearsal dinner, ceremony, reception

The University Club of Saint Paul is a cultural and architectural treasure of St. Paul, so it's no wonder that it's also one of Minnesota's most popular wedding destinations. With stunning views of downtown St. Paul and the river valley, this venue is as gorgeous outside as it is inside. The University Club of Saint Paul offers professional catering, and special benefits are available for members of the University Club or Saint Paul Athletic Club. At the top of Ramsey Hill, outdoor space at the adjacent Lookout Park is available for unique Minnesota views for the pictures of your special day. Wedding packages include linens, tableware, chairs and tables, tablecloths, and a wooden dance floor. Multimedia equipment and a piano are also included upon request. For an intimate wedding in the overlooking a bustling city, University Club of Saint Paul will not disappoint.

651-222-1751
420 Summit Ave., St. Paul
www.universityclubofstpaul.com

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Guests: up to 175

Available for: Ceremony, reception

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715-354-3646
2799 27th St., Birchwood, WI
www.stoutislandlodge.com

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Guests: Inquire

Available for: Ceremony, reception

The sister of the University Club of Saint Paul is another popular Minnesotan wedding location, the Saint Paul Athletic Club. This venue includes a private club, a skyline view of the city, and a variety of ballrooms. The ceremony and reception spaces are indoors but all include breathtaking views of downtown St. Paul. Setup and cleanup are assisted by the Saint Paul Athletic Club faculty, and all setup can start at 9:00 a.m. and all cleanup must end by 1:00 a.m. the following morning. Alcohol and catering are provided by professional chefs in addition to a multimedia system, a variety of entertainment options, and a selection of decor. With its stunning and historic architecture and convenient location in the heart of the city, the Saint Paul Athletic Club will bring every beloved aspect of St. Paul to your individual wedding. An on-site café, bar and grand ballroom can cater to every size and type of wedding. Additionally, members of the Saint Paul Athletic Club will receive a discounted rental rate.

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LIFELONG BRUNCH

BY TERRANCE GRIEP / PHOTOGRAPHY BY CANARY GREY PHOTOGRAPHY



CONTINUED ON PAGE 32





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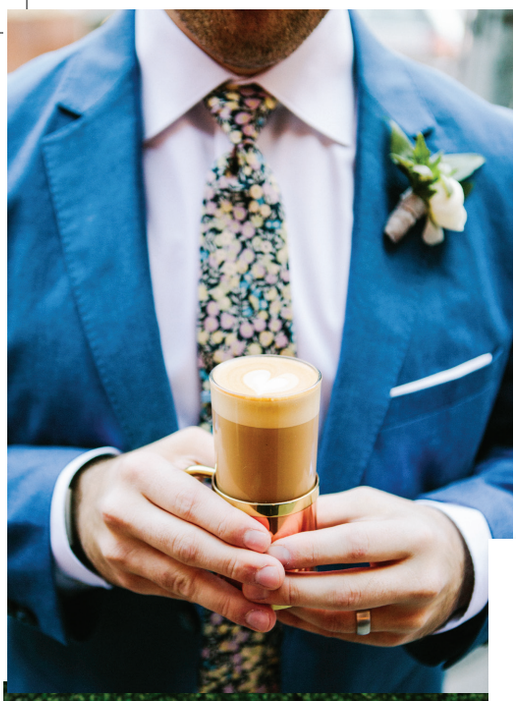
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Except for the bluegrass band, it might have been any other brunch in Minneapolis on October 1, 2016. At first glance, it seemed like a casual, cakes-under-glass, bring-your-own-bongo, specials-scribbled-in-pink-limestone kind of affair: novelty donuts sprinkled with sweet rumors, dunked in custom coffee, and washed down with mimosas or Bloody Marys.

But there was that bluegrass band. And the flowers. And the decor. And the photographers. And the alabaster light bulbs gleaming on a firecracker string that spanned the walls like an electric day-glo spider web. Oh, and the people in their dozens, sitting at set tables, applauding two handsome, young men in nearly identical blue suits who raised their clasped hands at the front of the love-sized room.

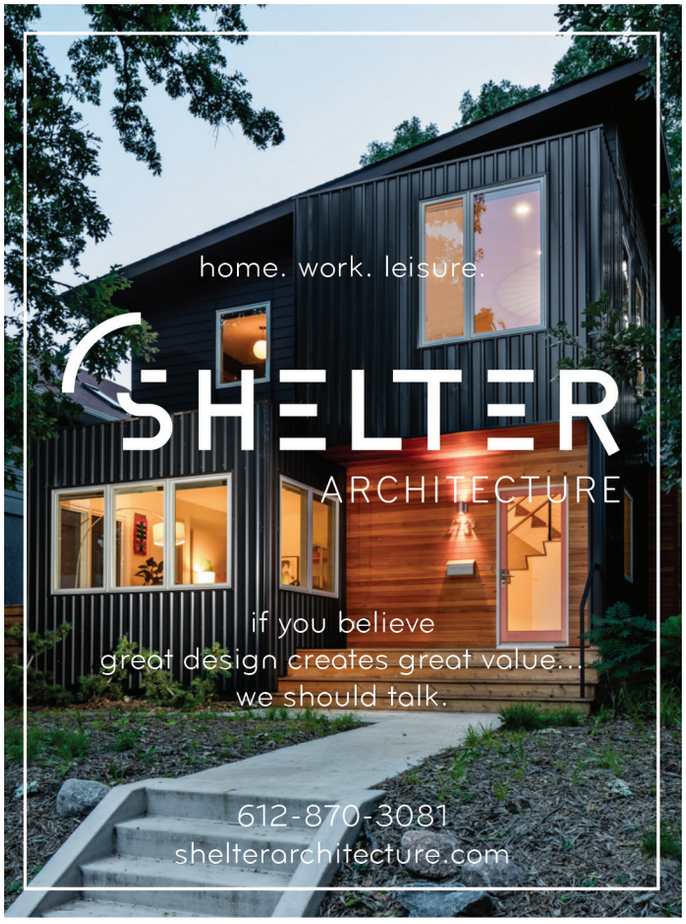
So it wasn't any other brunch in Minneapolis, after all. It was a wedding; it was their wedding.

They were (and are) Michael Abata and Joel Dumonsau, and these are their adventures in matrimony. "We wanted a celebration that was easy, relaxed, and fun," Michael says, "so we thought to ourselves, brunch!" This decision would prove to be a deceptively tall order, mixing formality and informality, tradition and innovation, baked goods and wedding bells.

It all started with another encounter that was easy, relaxed, and fun: the couple's initial commingling, itself precipitated via app. "Our first date was at Muddy Waters on a Monday after work in early October 2014," remembers Michael. "It was supposed to be just one drink, but three drinks later, we knew we had something special. We connected on so many levels."

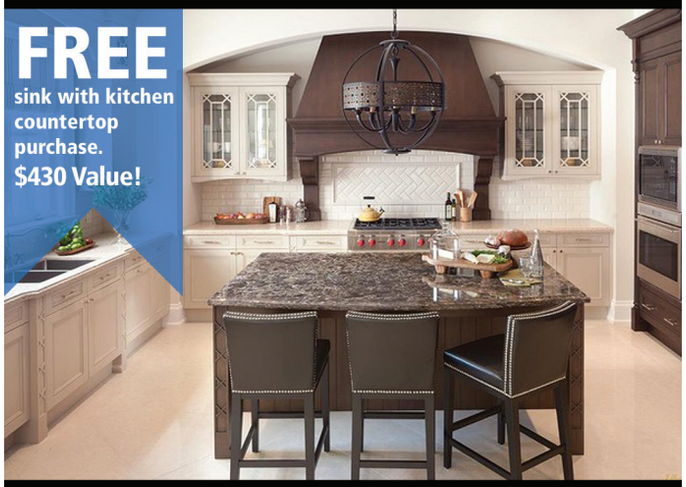
That multilevel connection could have melted in the heat of subsequent personal travails, but instead, it was tempered. "We went through several personal rough patches," says Michael, reliving the time when the two men were an official couple. "Knowing we could get through just about anything together, as a team, solidified our connection with each other. Our relationship was always so

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34



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easy. It was the first time I felt truly comfortable dating another person."

After 16 months, the relationship was ready for permanence. Fortunately, the United States Supreme Court was just catching up with Michael and Joel. "We were together in 2015 when SCOTUS declared marriage equality the law of the land," Michael says. "It was a very exciting day for both of us! But neither of us are very impulsive, so we didn't run to the courthouse or book a flight to Vegas. Joel had worked on the marriage campaigns in Minnesota, so the concept of a gay couple being married definitely wasn't foreign or new."

Despite their ecstasy at its legalization, marriage was an institution that both prospective grooms took seriously, soberly. Joe observes, "I think that marriage is a stabilizing and normalizing force, so I was always attracted to the idea of being married to someone as opposed to a domestic partnership, civil union, or whatever."

The course toward marriage was clear, but before a wedding could take place, it had to be preceded by a proposal…and a proposal for a timeless, time-tested commitment invited a timeless, time-tested backdrop. Michael reminisces, "I proposed to Joel in Joshua Tree National Park just outside of Palm Springs, California, in mid-February when we were on a getaway with friends."

Interestingly, the proposal represented a kind of preemptive strike. "Joel had the big ask planned for a few months," Michael says. "After a morning hike in the park, we found ourselves on this expansive overlook with the beautiful Joshua trees and rolling rock formations behind us. I was so nervous I faked a leg injury to get down on my knee. Luckily, our friends were prepared with cameras when I asked Joel. It was a pretty magical moment!"

Transferring the magic of that moment to a wedding ceremony proved a formidable task. "We gave our wedding stylists a lot of inspiration from our engagement in Palm Springs, but not too many specifics in planning decor and floral, so it was hard to have a really specific vision in our heads," recalls Michael, as the idea of marrying brunch to marriage came into focus. "As we were planning and telling people about our idea, it got both our friends and ourselves really excited."

That excitement proved contagious. "Our families were eager to help and support us in any way they could," says Michael. "Many of our family and friends participated in our wedding ceremony and helped us prep for the celebration."

This prep assumed a myriad of forms, including a kind of reconnaissance. "Attending a few weddings also helped us determine what we liked and what we could do without, so we planned our wedding with only things we liked," Michael asserts. "For us, it was all about throwing a fabulous party for family and friends versus having a formal or traditional wedding ceremony."

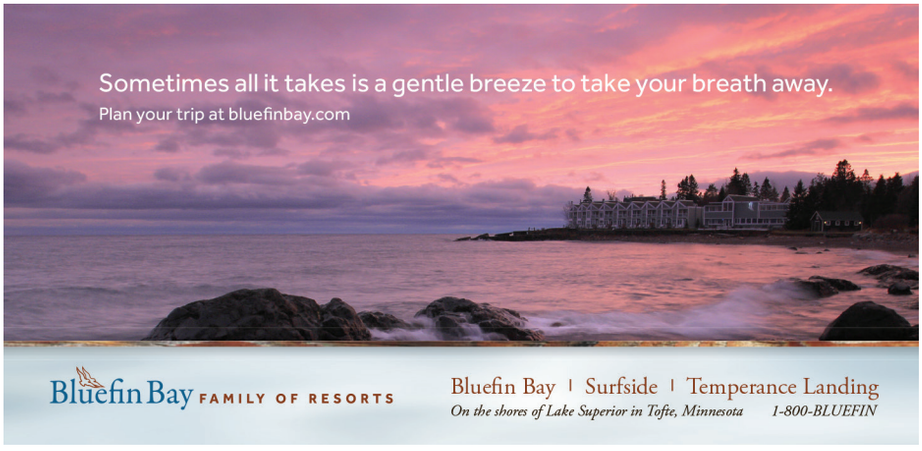
Whether it was a ceremony or a party, formal or traditional, the celebration's impending fabulousness catalyzed the extant work. Foreshadowing their impending union, the two men split party-producing duties, according to their individual strengths. "Both of us had a lot of experience planning events in former jobs, so we were so excited to plan our own big event," says Michael. "I took on the decor, invitations, music, and photography. Joel managed the venue selection, catering, budgeting, hotel block, and making sure everything got done. It was a match made in wedding-planning heaven. We each got to plan our favorite parts and it all came together for a really fun day."

When that really fun day arrived, it was accompanied by a natural nervousness that quickly proved unfounded. "When we arrived that morning, we were floored with how gorgeously everything came together!" enthuses Michael. "The day ended up being exactly what we wanted: just a big celebration with friends and family that felt both relaxed and welcoming to all." ■

Photographer: Wing Ta, Canary Grey Photography
Date of Wedding: October 1, 2016
Ceremony and Reception: 514 Studios
Florist and Stylist: Maven
Wedding Coordinator: Bre Ward
Cake: Glam Doll Donuts, Sift Gluten Free, Angel Food Bakery
Catering: Chowgirls Killer Catering, Misfit Coffee
Invitations: Minted.com







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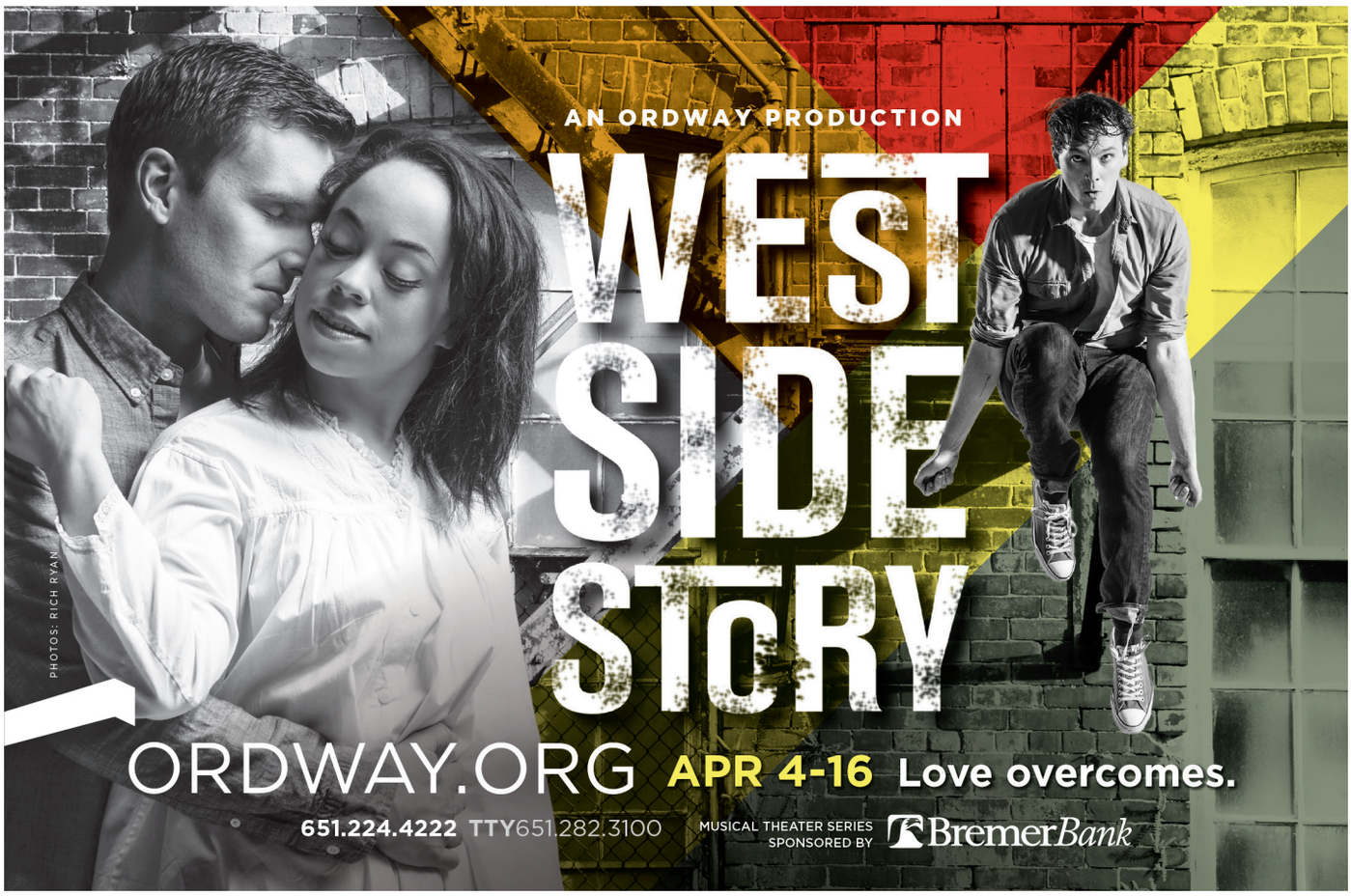
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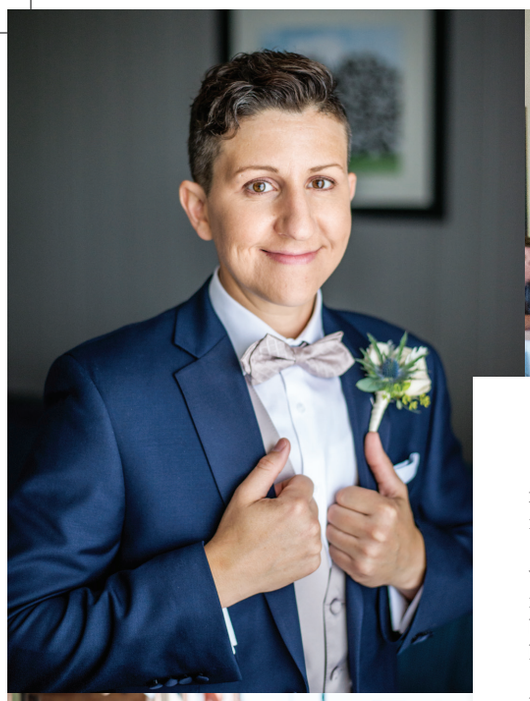
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The year was 2007. One June night, the since-closed by-and-for-queer-women club known as Pi Bar played host to a fateful meeting that would spur true love.

Tracy Le Capitaine laid her eyes on Kristy Wydeven (who would later take Tracy's name), and the Twin Cities' longest-running monthly lesbian night, Twilight (also now-defunct), would be the perfect excuse for a first date the following month at Dinkytown's Kitty Cat Klub.

"I would love to say the day I met her I knew I wanted to marry her," Kristy says. "I was in awe of her beauty, but realistically it was infatuation. Our first year was just getting to know each other, second year was working through major kinks and by year three I knew that I could be with her the rest of my life!"

But marriage would have to wait, as both women wanted the union to be legal and weren't interested in doing a symbolic or out-of-state ceremony.

"Marriage wasn't a big part of my dreams for my life, growing up or as an adult," Tracy admits, "so I was in no rush to think about it. Kristy and I moved in together after about a year and a half of dating. And for the next few years we focused on buying a house, renovating our home, and started to plan having a child together."

The pair got involved in the fight for equal marriage here in Minnesota and, Tracy says, were somewhat shocked when it then became legal in their home state of Wisconsin, and then nationwide.

She says, "We had both imagined that a legal marriage wouldn't be possible for many years, but suddenly it was possible! It caught us both a bit off-guard, and we then began to think, *Wow, I guess we'll have to figure out how we want to get married!* Then we began to talk about what we'd like for our wedding. At this point, we'd already been together for quite a few years and were the 'old married couple' among our friends."

Eventually, Tracy says they almost considered themselves engaged essentially. "But when I'd say we could just *be* engaged, Kristy would protest and say, 'No, I want to do it right.' She asked my mother in January of 2013 if she could propose to me, and my mom happily gave her permission."

In October 2013, they went shopping together for a vintage ring for Tracy. And then nothing. But secretly, Kristy had a big plan in action. Initially, Kristy wanted to pull something off that, as she says, would take an entire movie production team to pull off.

"I was lucky to have a reality check brunch with my buddies who brought me down to earth and helped direct my idea in a more simple, yet still dramatic once-in-a-lifetime proposal," she says. "After Team Brunch, I had the plan and then it was just a matter of getting everything in order."

Kristy had made "Marry Me?" signs for her friends to hold up, got confetti bombs and the ring all set. January 11, 2014 started as a typical night out at Grrrl Scout. Just when Tracy might have started catching on since both her best friend and sister (visiting from Green Bay) came to Grrrl Scout that night, Kristy pretended to be a little too tipsy to throw Tracy off. "I figured she would as-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

Photo by Bridget Knight Photography

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sume there is no way I would propose drunk, and of course that is true," Kristy notes.

Soon the dance competition began on the stage. As one of the Grrrl Scout photographers, Tracy was urged up on stage to get a different perspective, which is when Kristy escaped to change out of her jeans and T-shirt combo into something proposal-worthy.

"As soon as the competition was done is when my nerves take over," Kristy gushes, who returned, slowly walking in to "Somebody to Love" by Queen.

Tracy remembers, "After a few measures, lettered signs raised high at the back of the room, spelling out Marry Me? I looked to my left, to the side of the stage, to see Kristy climbing up, dressed all snazzy, and clearly quite sober. She grabbed the microphone and brought out that vintage ring, and proposed. And suddenly, all in front of the stage were many of our closest friends and neighbors that had been hiding from me until that point." Then it was confetti poppers and champagne as the couple finished the night celebrating with all their friends at Grrrl Scout.

But, as it turns out, their son, Vincent, would throw a wrench in their wedding plans. Initially, Tracy and Kristy planned for a Green Bay wedding in a 1920s hotel undergoing renovations, closer to their supportive families. "We didn't want to exclude any of them from our celebration by making any of them travel far," Tracy says. "We could be the very first couple in decades to get married at the hotel. Our friends traveling in could stay at the hotel, and everything could be all together at this amazing venue. But it was a long way from being done, and at that point, we were in no hurry to get hitched."

Through much of 2014, like the couple years before, the couple was trying to get pregnant. And, as luck would have it, that September Tracy was pregnant. And that changed everything. Improvements on their fixer-upper home to prepare for a baby took time and money, and as the months went by it seemed more and more impossible to pull together a large out-of-state wedding before the baby was born.

"We weren't sure how we should do it," Tracy adds. "We never figured out a good plan, and, as we entered the last month of my pregnancy, we still weren't married. The baby had some problems during the pregnancy, which was really scary for Kristy. We have friends who went through the trauma of not having legal rights to each other and their child when they had medical problems during the birth. We didn't want that to happen to us, especially when we could easily avoid that by just finally getting married."

Finally, 10 days before Vincent's scheduled delivery, in the late evening of May 22, Tracy and Kristy called their best friends and planned to meet at Minnehaha Park the next evening to exchange vows. With an officiant and a photographer among their friends, the stage was set to be legally wed.

On June 1, Vincent arrived as planned and the next few months were a blur. Months went by and the thought of having a large wedding seemed daunting, Tracy says. "No one can

imagine how their life will get swallowed up by their first child. I had hoped to have a reception in the fall, but with a newborn, I didn't know how we could pull that together."

Eventually, with the help of Tracy's cousin, the couple decided on a year after they said their vows as the perfect time to hold a reception, calling it a "wedding celebration" and thinking of it as a kind of renewal. Unfortunately, the hotel they were initially eyeing wasn't even close to being done, yet the vision of a 1920s deco-style was still in their heads.

Tracy went looking for other historic venues in downtown Green Bay, and she didn't have to look far to find the beautiful historic theater she's always loved (and, coincidentally, was where her mother had her first job). For the reception, a brewery just across the river from the theater that had recently expanded into an old cannery building (where her grandmother had worked, adding yet another family connection) made a perfect space to house their 150 guests. With Kristy's original "Marry Me?" signs as a backdrop behind the head table, the wedding celebration had come full circle.

"I mainly gave Tracy free reign and I gave my two cents where I wanted it," Kristy chimes in. "She showed me pictures of her ideas and I saw her vision and knew it would be perfect. My favorite part of showing myself [in the big day] was having a mini saw to cut the cake; I am a general contractor and I really wanted something different and fun."

The vendors chosen to bring their celebration to fruition played a big part in the day's success and making the couple feel comfortable. "Not a single one of our vendors had a flicker of doubt or weirdness in being involved in our same-sex wedding," Tracy shares. "If they had, we would have found someone else. But not one treated us any differently."

With the wedding (both legal and celebration) behind them, Tracy and Kristy plan to have one more kid, finish updates on their house, and "go through this thing called Life together." Kristy says, "I work very hard running my general contracting company, GreenLight, and Tracy works hard raising our son. I just wish we had more time with each other. We do make sure we have a date night once a week which I think all couples should. We go on vacation once a year to let loose and spend quality time with each other. Later in life we plan to retire someplace warm together like Puerto Rico, we love it there." ■

Legal Wedding: May 23, 2015
Photographer: Bridget Knight Photography
Wedding Celebration: June 11, 2016
Photographer: Kasey and Ben Photography
Ceremony: The Meyer Theater, Green Bay
Reception: Titletown Brewery, Green Bay
Florist: Alycia Seymour from Arts & Flowers Design Studio
Rings: Primitive Precision Metalcraft and Gloria's Jewelers
Tracy's Gown: Jenny Packham
Attendant Dresses: David's Bridal
Kristy's Suit: Calvin Klein
Attendant Suits: Mens Warehouse
Officiant: Cade Finn
Vegan Cake: Danielle Hille at Kavarna Coffeehouse

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KRISTY & A-K GLOE-THORDIN

Photographer: Rebecca Jean Lawrence Photography
Date of Wedding: September 4, 2016
Dating Since: September 2014
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Day Block Event Center
Florist: Acanthus
Wedding Coordinator: Sarah Springer
Cake: Friends made the cake; Cookies by Kim Christensen
Invitations, Programs, and Mason Jars: Tim & Jeff Cronin-Hnilicka
Officiant: Jay Linnell
Caterer: Sonora Grill
Bartenders: With a Twist















ALEXIS TRAUGER & ALEXANDRA HAMMETT

Photographer: Daly Proof Photography
Date of Wedding: September 10, 2016
Dating Since: March 2012
Location of Ceremony & Reception: The Bachelor Farmer
Florist: Foxglove Market & Studio
Stylist: Juut Salonspa, St. Paul
Cake: The Bachelor Farmer
Invitations: Minted









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KAISA & DARIAN LIGHTFOOT

Photographer: Jessica Bargate
Date of Wedding: September 9-11, 2016
Dating Since: Fall 2013
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Saint John's Landing Camp, St. Croix State Park
Florist: Sam Stiles using farmers market flowers
S'mores Cupcakes: Kelly Jackson (Kaisa's Mother)
Invitations: Vistaprint















TONIA ASLAKSON & REBECCA "B" BANN ASLAKSON

Photographer: Charissa Norling Photography
Date of Wedding: September 18, 2016
Dating Since: September 14, 2012
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Paikka
Florist: Melissa Stratton, Sadie's Couture Floral and Event Styling
Wedding Coordinator: Savannah McDeid
Stylist: Lori Sherrick
Cake: Cossetta Pasticceria
Invitations: PHUSION LLC, Chris Dahl









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Photographer: Rebecca Jean Lawrence Photography
Date of Wedding: September 25, 2016
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Private Residence
Florist: DIY
Wedding Coordinator: Teresa Mock of L'Etoile Events
Cake: Costco















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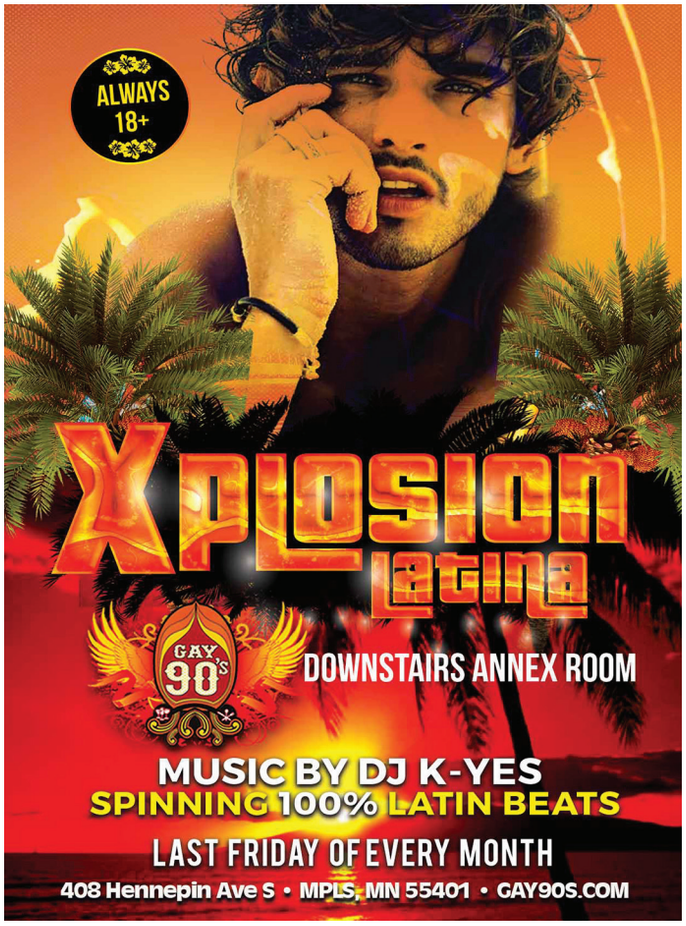
Photographer: Black Feather Creative
Date of Wedding: September 26, 2016
Dating Since: 2012
Location of Ceremony & Reception: A friend's farm in South Range, WI
Florist: Wholesale flowers, designed by friends and family
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Cake: How Sweet It Is










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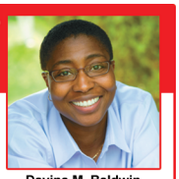
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